GUIDE TO THE S17 MATACO FILE

[The Mataco (Mataguayo) are an American Indian ethnic group located in the western sector of the Argentine Gran Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo (5: Fock, p. 91). Greenberg classifies the Mataco language within the Macro-Panoan subfamily of the Gé-Pano-Carib language family. Peoples who are closely related linguistically include the Choroti, Ashluslay, Maca, and Lengua-Enimago (cf. Julian H. Steward and Louis C. Faron, Native Peoples of South America, 1959: pp. 22, 415). Very little data are available concerning Mataco demography. The only total population estimate in the file is the one presented in 1: Pelleschi (p. 43), based upon a missionary account published in 1886; this gives a population of about 20,000 for the Mataco in the late 19th century.

The Mataco are apparently divided into three main regional groups: the Mataco-Vejos, the Mataco-Guisnay, and the Mataco-Noctenes (cf. esp. 2: Karsten, p. 26 and end map, for the distribution of these groups). The Mataco-Noctenes are said to be the least acculturated group, although influenced somewhat by the neighboring Toba.

No attempt will be made here to outline the major aspects of Mataco culture since a good, compact cultural summary is presented in 8: Moore.

Eight sources have been processed thus far for the Mataco file; two of these are translations from Spanish, one from French, and the remaining five are in English. 1: Pelleschi is the earliest and main source, but it falls far short of constituting an adequate ethnography. Pelleschi was a civil engineer who traveled in the Chaco around 1875, and his observations on the Mataco cover a wide variety of topics, including an analysis of their

language. This source also contains an historical section by Lafone Quevedo, who was responsible for expanding, reorganizing, and translating Pelleschi's work into Spanish from the original Italian edition.

2: Karsten is by an ethnologist who did extensive field work among the Indians of the Gran Chaco during 1911-13. But he worked primarily with the Choroti and Toba, making only occasional visits to the Mataco except for a stay of about one month in 1912 among the Mataco-Noctenes (pp. 17, 20, 26-27). While Karsten presents some general data on the Mataco, his emphasis is on religious life.

Métraux and Dijour are both ethnologists who did field work in the Gran Chaco during the 1930s. Again, Métraux's work, as in the case of Karsten's, focused mainly on other groups - especially the Pilaga and Toba. He did begin a longer study of the Mataco in 1939, but this was cut short by illness.

3: Métraux, based on field work in 1933, is mostly an account of myths and tales, whereas 4: Métraux consists of brief notes on a variety of topics. 6: Métraux deals with Mataco suicide, most of the information being obtained from English missionaries in the area.

Dijour was in charge of a mission to the Argentine Chaco in 1932-33, but there is no indication of how much time she spent with the Mataco. 7: Dijour describes their ceremonies for the expulsion of illness and evil spirits.

The most recent ethnographic work in the file is by Fock, who did his field research in 1962. 5: Fock is a good, detailed study of marriage patterns.

As it now stands, the Mataco file lacks data in depth, although there is a fairly good spread of information over a broad range of subjects.]

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